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## **Brand Addiction in the Contexts of Luxury and Fast-Fashion Brands\*\***

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### **Abstract**

Although research on consumer-brand relationship has gained increasing interest among scholars, little is known to date about its most intense form – brand addiction. This research explores the main motives and outcomes of this phenomenon in the two brand categories: luxury and fast-fashion brands. The authors conducted 21 in-depth interviews in the U.S. to tap into the respondents' addictive experiences with luxury and fast-fashion brands. Different themes emerged regarding the motivations for luxury and fast-fashion brand addiction. Self-expressiveness, status consumption and perceived quality are motivators for luxury fashion brand addiction while continuous update of fashion-led items, perceived value, and product assortments are motivators for fast-fashion brand addiction. As for the consequences, interpersonal relationships and financial issues emerged as common themes for addiction to certain luxury and fast-fashion brands while selectivity of style and motivation to work harder surfaced as themes for addiction to particular luxury brands. The results also show that brand addiction may cause both positive and negative effects on consumers' well-being. This research provides important implications for consumer-brand relationships and ethical considerations for brand managers.

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, brands are shifting their focus from attracting new customers to strengthening relationships with existing ones (Grace et al., 2020). The conceptual domain of consumer-brand relationship has been extended from general attitudinal tendencies such as loyalty and commitment to concepts that describe more intense connection with brands such as brand attachment and brand love (Alvarez and Fournier, 2016), and most recently brand addiction (Mrad and Cui, 2017; Cui et al., 2018) which represents the closest or the most intense level of relationship with brands. Brand addiction refers to “consumer’s psychological state that involves mental and behavioral preoccupation with a particular brand, driven by uncontrollable urges to possess the brand’s products, and involving positive affectivity and gratification” (Cui et al., 2018, p. 124). Our review of the literature reveals an important gap. Research on brand addiction has mainly focused on its conceptualization (Mrad, 2018; Cui et al., 2018) and measurement (Mrad and Cui, 2017) in the contexts of general product types (e.g., Cui et al., 2018) and general forms of fashion products and brands (e.g., Mrad and Cui, 2017). As Lukka (2014) points out that similar behaviors may have distinct connotations and casual effects in diverse contexts, consumers engage in luxury and fast-fashion brands for different psychological motives (Ko et al., 2017). Motives for luxury brands are linked to consumers’ need for using them as symbols of social status and power (Tynan et al., 2010), and fast-fashion brands are often linked to “buy it now because it won’t be here tomorrow” (Byun and Sternquist, 2012). Moreover, luxury brands have premium prices and can inspire a deep connection with customers (Ko et al., 2017). However, there is little research on whether motives and consequences of consumers’ addiction to luxury brands are different from affordable trendy items from fast-fashion brands.

According to Lukka (2014), behaviors can be examined by interpretive research that can take relevant causal relations within certain context to examine motivators of actions and causal consequences. Thus, the present research aims to fill this gap by investigating the motivations and consequences of addiction to luxury and fast-fashion brands through an exploratory qualitative study. Scholars in qualitative research have emphasized the value of examining causal explanations through interpretations of qualitative data (Lukka, 2014; Spiggle, 1994). From our data analysis different themes emerged regarding the motivations for luxury and fast-fashion brand addiction. Regarding the consequences, our findings suggest both positive and negative consequences from both luxury and fast-fashion brands. The present research is valuable because it provides a deeper understanding of how consumers feel, think, and act with their addictive luxury and fast-fashion brands, which could provide valuable guidance for retailers and marketing practitioners to develop effective strategies for branding and customer-relationship management. In the rest part of this paper, we first present a review of the literature and raise important research issues. We then report the methodology employed for the present research. This is followed by the report of the findings from the qualitative data analysis. The paper concludes with a discussion of theoretical and managerial implications and further research directions.

## **Literature review**

### *Brand addiction*

In her seminal work, Fournier (1998) asserted that the relationship between a consumer and a brand is similar to connections among people, in that both follow a continuum of the intensity of the relationship from non-intense emotions to moderate emotions, friendly emotions, and

passionate love to culmination of an addictive obsession (Fehr and Russel, 1991; Sternberg, 1986). Empirical research demonstrates that established close consumer–brand relationships at the most intense level are linked to activating the insula, a part of the brain that is behind compulsion and addiction (Reimann et al., 2012). Cui et al. (2018) provide several important features of brand addiction. Their findings suggest that brand addicts form very close connections with their addictive brands to the extent that they consider it part of their comfort zone, reveal uncontrollable desires, experience states of dependency to their addictive brands and consistently consider buying everything that their addictive brands manufacture and launch to the extent that they tend to hold a collection of their addictive brand's products, disregarding all other brands available in the market. Brand addicts also tend to experience feelings of gratification from possessing their brands while they may reveal feelings of anxiety when they are incapable of engaging in activities that are linked to their addictive brands. As they usually experience feelings of satisfaction and comfort when engaged with the brand, they tend to be continuously pre-occupied with activities related to the brand and continuously encouraging others to purchase it. Finally, to possess their addictive brands, brand addicts may either spend their income on the brand, wait until they have saved some money or borrow money from their surroundings.

Brand addiction may seem to share some similar features with other forms of addictive behaviors (Mrad and Cui, 2018). Consumer addictive behaviors are regarded as an aberrant behavior with a cost to consumer wellbeing and society (Budden and Griffin, 1996). However, not all addictive behaviors are harmful. Sussman and Sussman (2011) suggest that different addictive behaviors can derive from hedonistic (e.g., drug use, sex, gambling), nurturant (e.g., compulsive helping, work addiction, shopping addiction, love, exercise) or other (e.g., to achieve fantasy or oblivion)

motives. In the addiction literature, some researchers state that one should not associate completely the term “addiction” with drug habits as doing so strips the semantic meaning of a concept to the context in which drugs are not involved (Alexander and Schweighofer, 1988). As “addiction can be a devastating, ultimately fatal condition, but it can also be harmless or even beneficial” (Alexander and Schweighofer, 1988, p. 154), researchers believe that one must understand addiction beyond substance addiction (Martin et al. 2013) to include a diversity of behavioral addictions such as exercising, gambling, using the Internet and playing video games (Griffiths, 1997, 2002).

Contrary to most forms of addictive behaviors, findings on brand addiction show that this addictive behavior fulfills some positive functions for the concerned individuals (Elliott et al., 1996; Cui et al., 2018). Mrad and Cui’s (2017) findings indicate that while some consumers who are addicted to particular fashion brands may be obsessed with those brands, it is not clear yet whether they will certainly go into debt. Rather, their findings suggest that some brand addicts have the tendency to devote a certain percentage of their monthly income to purchase the products of their addictive brands. Their research was mainly performed on general fashion brands. Research on consumer brand relationships and addictive behavior are currently captivating considerate attention in the fashion context (Erdogmus and Büdeyri-Turan, 2012), with studies on addictive behavior linking mainly to appearance related products such as clothing, shoes, jewelry and cosmetics (O’Guinn and Faber, 1989; Christenson et al., 1994; Schlosser et al., 1994). Given the distinct features of luxury and fast-fashion products, further research is needed to examine causal explanations of consumers’ addictive behaviors in the different contexts of luxury and fast-fashion brands.

### *Luxury and fast-fashion brands*

Since early times fashion has been recognized as an important social force that influences people's behavior and is closely linked with a nation's social and economic life (Hurlock, 1929). With the increasing market competitiveness and social-economic advancement, fashion business and consumption are shaped into luxury and fast-fashion with differential representations of brands. Luxury fashion brands are those brands that entail the highest level of quality and are premium priced (Fuchs et al., 2013; Nieroda et al., 2018). Luxury brands are recognized by their materiality, the individual experience of such products, and their symbolic roles as signifiers of wealth and taste (Joy et al., 2014). Ko et al. (2017) highlight the features of luxury brands as “consumers 1) perceive to be high quality; 2) offer authentic value via desired benefits, whether functional or emotional; 3) have a prestigious image within the market built on qualities such as artisanship, craftsmanship or service quality; 4) be worthy of commanding a premium price; and 5) be capable of inspiring a deep connection, or resonance, with the consumer” (p. 2).

In contrast, fast-fashion is characterized by quick response (short production and distribution lead times that enable close matching of supply with uncertain demand) and enhanced design (highly fashionable product design) (Cachon and Swinney, 2011). Fashions are temporary cyclical phenomena adopted by consumers for a particular time and situation (Sproles, 1981). This may explain why fast-fashion is carefully monitoring consumer and industry tastes for unexpected fads and reducing design lead times, using “trend spotters” and designers to gather instant market information, paying close attention to seasonal fashion shows, and frequently changing product assortment (Coachon and Swinney, 2011). In the meantime, some fast-

fashion brands are characterized by low prices, long-lasting range rotation and accessible and trendy products that copy and replicate the most up-to-date luxury fashion brands' designs (Amatulli et al, 2016).

There is increasing obsession with luxury brands among some consumers (McFerran et al., 2014). For example, Fuchs et al. (2013) have found that user design of brand names backfires because labeling the collection as user designed reduces the collection of a luxury fashion brand designed by its company name. Indeed, the concept of brand – especially the brand name and identity – is fundamental for the business performance in fashion markets (Fionda and Moore, 2009). Dion and Arnould (2011) argue that, from a philosophical perspective, luxury is not about the material form of the objects but the symbolic use and relationship that develop with regards to the objects, such as the postures, ways of speaking, interest, and relationships to time and space that luxury organizes. Correspondingly, retailing marketers need to pay particular attention to how luxury is effectively materialized and expressed in particular cultural contexts (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009 cited in Dion and Arnould, 2011). This suggests that consumers' experience with brands plays an important role in the luxury experience. Indeed, branding in fashion has become as much about branding the experience as the product (Fionda and Moore, 2009).

McFerran et al.'s study (2014) indicates that luxury brands are associated with status, wealth, exclusion, and ego-enhancement, and consumption of luxury brands may induce a feeling of pride that signify success and achievement. McFerran et al. (2014) propose two facets of pride associated with consumption of luxury brands. "Authentic pride" results from hard work and



success, promoting perseverance at difficult tasks, empathy towards out-groups, and contribute to the development of a genuine and deep-rooted sense of self-esteem (Tracy and Robins, 2007). “Hubris pride” is associated with narcissism and other undesirable outcomes such as aggression and hostility, interpersonal problems, relationship conflict, and prejudice against out-groups (Tracy and Robins, 2007; Tracy et al. 2009). Their studies have found that “authentic pride leads to a heightened desire for luxury brands, whereas hubristic pride is the outcome of these purchases, and is the form of pride signaled to observers by these purchases” (p. 455). This suggests a paradox of luxury brands consumption: while heightened authentic pride drives purchases of luxury brands, consumers feel heightened hubristic pride following consumption of luxury brands (McFerran et al. 2014). As Berthon et al. (2009) argue, understanding of luxury may become a necessity to understanding branding in general.

In the context of fast-fashion, quick response to the market trend and demand underpins the strategies adopted by fast-fashion brands such as Zara, H&M, and Benetton. As Cachon and Swinney (2009) note, fast-fashion brands aim to better match supply and demand and influence consumer purchasing behavior by reducing the frequency and severity of season-ending clearance sales. On the other hand, enhanced fast-fashion design gives customers a trendier product that they value more, making them less willing to risk waiting for a sale if there is any chance that the item will stock out. Hence, “whereas quick response decreases the expected future utility of waiting for a price reduction, enhanced design increases the immediate utility of buying the product at the full price” (Coachon and Swinney, 2011, p. 779).

Extant literature suggests that the motivation for the consumption of luxury brands are different from the motivations for the consumption of fast-fashion brands (Ko et al., 2017). In many societies, the crave for status is an important driving power for acquiring luxury products (Dreze and Nunes, 2009). In the meantime, consumers are looking for a variety and continuously changing of assortments and following the fashion trends by always renewing their wardrobes (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010), thus triggering their demand for a variety of items at affordable prices (Gabrielli et al, 2013). As Aspers and Godart (2013) note, consumers' choices of fashion are framed by what is offered. Some research demonstrates that implementing both luxury and fast-fashion systems simultaneously may bring in significant rewards when consumers are sophisticated and behave strategically (i.e., anticipating future markdowns and intentionally delaying purchasing until a sale occurs) (Cachon and Swinney, 2011). Moreover, some fashion brands have adopted a co-branding strategy. It is observed that "each specific cobranding project of the designer luxury brand and the fast-fashion brand is usually a one-shot project, i.e., for the limited edition products" (Shen et al., 2017, p. 174). Taking the above together, the extant literature raises the need for understanding what drive a consumer to become addicted to a luxury versus fast-fashion brand, and what different consequences may come out from addiction to these different categories of fashion brands.

## **Methodology**

The present research employed a qualitative method, which helps with generating rich and deeper insights of consumers' experiences that are generally hard to investigate (Bradley, 2013).

To tap into the respondents' addictive experiences for luxury and fast-fashion brands, semi-structured interviews were conducted with American consumers. The authors selected the U.S. and more specifically focused on the fashion context since studies indicate that fashion products are ranked the first in consumers' compulsive buying (Black, 2007). Using compulsive buying as a reference point here is for the reasons that 1) no statistics are available about brand addicts population; and 2) brand addiction and compulsive buying are distinct from each other, but they share certain common elements under the higher-order category of addictive consumption (Fournier, 1998; Mrad and Cui, 2017, 2019), hence the market demand by fashion brand addicts might be similar to compulsive buying of fashion products.

A purposeful sampling was used for recruiting participants (Suri, 2011). In line with research on brand addiction (e.g. Batra et al. 2012; Cui et al. 2018; Mrad and Cui, 2017), participants were selected based on the criteria that they must already have a strong emotional attachment to a luxury or a fast-fashion brand. At first, the authors selected potential participants through an invitation message on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp targeting residents in the U.S. Interested individuals were to contact the researchers to participate in the study. To identify the qualified candidates among them, the researchers asked them to specify whether they had strong or normal attachment to one particular fashion brand and to specify the brand to which they were attached. Accordingly, the researchers decided whether to accept or decline the interested individuals for the interviews. Second, the researchers utilized a snowballing method to identify additional consumers in the selection process.

Eleven males and twelve females aged between 18 and 45 years were recruited as informants for the interviews. This number of informants were deemed justifiable for the purpose of the present research according to established guidelines on sampling for qualitative research. For example, prominent scholars in social science methodology recommend twelve informants for interview-type of qualitative research (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). The rationale of this practice can be seen in Crouch and McKenzie's (2006, 483) argument that since a qualitative research project "scrutinizes the dynamic qualities of a situation (rather than elucidating the proportionate relationships among its constituents), the issue of sample size – as well as representativeness – has little bearing on the project's basic logic". The age range was selected for the reason that addictive behaviors develop at the age of 18 with their average age ranging between 30 and 31 years old (Mrad and Cui, 2017). The face-to-face interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. Prior to the interview, the authors informed participants that they could withdraw at any time and assured them that their responses were confidential. All participants' names were changed in this transcript to respect their anonymity. The interviewees' profiles are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Interview participants' profiles

Name	Age	Gender	Favorite brand
Roy	18	Male	American Eagle**
Jade	18	Male	Tommy*
Amy	20	Female	Zara**
Zenna	21	Female	Gucci*
Mary	22	Female	Forever 21**
Zilia	22	Female	Burberry*
Olivia	22	Female	Gucci*
Helen	22	Female	Zara**
Jacob	22	Male	Tommy*
Yoanna	24	Female	Chanel*
Christina	25	Female	Chanel*
Carol	26	Female	Calvin Klein*
Ivy	26	Female	H&M**
Kevin	27	Male	J. Crew**

Harry	28	Male	Polo Ralph Lauren**
Jason	28	Male	Fendi*
Marc	31	Male	Diesel**
Joe	32	Male	Tommy**
Marcus	32	Male	Calvin Klein*
Ohan	32	Male	Zara**
Ray	37	Male	Polo Ralph Lauren*

\*Luxury fashion brand.

\*\*fast-fashion brand.

Thematic analysis was used for the present research to identify, describe and report themes in the data by following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. First, the authors transcribed the data verbatim and also read and re-read the data. The authors then analyzed the data extracts which they generated from the interview transcripts with similar semantic meanings and allocated code names. Given that the analysis was inductive, the codes were data-driven and thus the authors identified and categorized the themes from what emerged from the data (Spiggle, 1994). Next, the authors identified the main themes by merging similar codes together using the NVivo12 software package and reassessed the coded data extracts to ensure coherent pattern formation. The interpretation of the data also followed Spiggle's (1994) guidelines on referring to "the higher-order, more abstract conceptual layers of meaning constructed from or imposed on data", and "assessing the intensions and inferences of those one is studying (see Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1988), making sense of experience and behavior, and seeing or understanding some phenomenon in its own terms, grasping its essence" (p. 492). The next section presents the findings. Following Pratt's (2009) recommendation, the themes and the most compelling data from informants' narratives that effectively illustrate our points (power quotes) are presented in detail in the findings section, and a holistic presentation of brand type, key motivators, positive/negative consequences and additional supporting data that bolster the points articulated in the findings (proof quotes) are succinctly displayed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Key motivators, consequences and proof quotes

Brand Type	Key Motivators	Consequences	
		Positive	Negative
Luxury Fashion Brand Addiction	<p><b>Expressiveness of self and social identity:</b> Attractiveness to brands that looked like and resembled oneself.</p> <p><i>“So, this is part of being with CK, because they really fit my personality. ... I wouldn’t imagine myself changing my style, unless CK is gone and I would have to pick out something different. I can’t stop buying it. It fits my style and taste.” (Marcus)</i></p> <p><i>“I would say that my lifestyle fits the style of that brand is echoing which is why I will keep shopping there. It understands my lifestyle and it shows that I can afford the luxury lifestyle.” (Joe)</i></p>	<p><b>Motivation to work harder:</b> Working harder to shop more.</p> <p><i>“They will definitely work as twice as hard.” (Olivia)</i></p> <p><i>“For me it’s a motivation to be more of hard worker. This way I can get all what I want.” (Christina)</i></p>	<p><b>Selectivity of style:</b> Exclusive restriction to specific brands</p> <p><i>“They might not be open to other fashion styles out there, so, I feel like they are missing out on a lot of different opportunities they can find in other luxury brands.” (Mary)</i></p> <p><i>“They end up with the same styles just because they are shopping there too often.” (Carol)</i></p>
	<p><b>Status values:</b> Signaling certain socially admired manners and status.</p> <p><i>“If you buy and wear this very expensive brand, then it shows that you have a good job that gives you a good amount of money.” (Harry)</i></p> <p><i>“If I see someone wearing Chanel, I would probably think she is either married to an extremely rich husband or she is either a doctor or a lawyer, someone who is important” (Christina)</i></p>		<p><b>Interpersonal relationship:</b> Spending less time engaging in some family or social relationships.</p> <p><i>“Their brand becomes their main focus. They lose attention to other important things... they will end up with no time for others. All they care about is visiting the store or talking about the brand.” (Marcus)</i></p> <p><i>“They would prioritize buying the brand instead of paying for more important things... so personal trouble with their respective family member.” (Helen)</i></p>
	<p><b>Quality:</b> Superior materials, components, physical performance, workmanship and durability</p> <p><i>“I am obsessed with this brand. It never failed to disappoint me. Probably I won’t even look at anything else.” (Ray)</i></p> <p><i>“The material is very good and lasts long. Quality means something that you wash and it doesn’t just shrink, something that you can wear without ironing.” (Carol)</i></p>		
		<p><b>Financial Management (Controllable):</b> Spending considerable yet controllable amounts of money on the brand.</p> <p><i>“I would say, you would spend a big amount of money, a lot a lot of money, which I am personally experiencing with Calvin Klein but it is still manageable.” (Marcus)</i></p>	
			<p><b>Financial Management (Uncontrollable):</b> uncontrollable spending resulting in personal loans and credit cards over usage.</p>

			<p>“ You are going to start relying on credit cards ... If you don't even have the money to pay them off, late payments , minimum payments. This will get you in trouble with the credit card company. These people could resort to lending money and going into more debt.” (Olivia)</p> <p>“I guess getting a lot of debt at the end of the day.” (Harry)</p>
Fast-Fashion Brand Addiction	<p><b>Continuous Update of Fashion-Led Items:</b> regularly refreshing assortment of items.</p> <p>“It is very fast moving and it keeps up with the needs of modern women. I know that whenever I want to update my wardrobe, I always have a new collection available at H&amp;M.” (Ivy)</p> <p>“Some become so attached to fast fashion brands because they probably have collections that are faster than luxury brands”. (Carol)</p>		
	<p><b>Perceived Value:</b> providing good monetary value of products with reasonably displayed prices compared to other fashion brands.</p> <p>“I trust Zara. When I order from them I do not have worry about the quality or the price since I know that they have trendy and cute clothes at affordable prices. I will get what I am paying for.” (Helen)</p>		
	<p><b>Product Assortments:</b> Offering a variety of choices and styles.</p> <p>“There is a variety of choice for different usage. They range from formal clothes to casual ones. This includes dresses, suits, shirts, jeans and watches.” (Marc)</p> <p>“I find a huge selection of products in the store with different styles featuring different colors and different sizes.” (Ivy)</p>		<p><b>Interpersonal relationship:</b> spending less time engaging in some family or social relationships.</p> <p>“Yeah losing their friends. If they are going out and they are getting to Zara every now and then, it is like boring.” (Ohan)</p> <p>“I will always be thinking about this brand, I am so addicted to it. I will be like what I should get from this brand...so it kind of take part of my life.” (Marc)</p>
		<p><b>Financial management (Controllable):</b> Spending considerable yet controllable amounts of money on the brand.</p> <p>“Customers end up spending more money. However, the consequences of brand addiction to fast fashion brands are not as severe as luxurious brands since you spend less.” (Carol)</p>	

## Findings

### *Brand Addiction for Luxury fashion - Motivators*

#### Expressiveness of self and social identity

The data analysis suggests that our informants' intention of expressing self and social identity may drive them to become addicted to specific luxury brands. Informants described that they were attracted to luxury brands that looked like them and resembled who they were. They asserted that such characteristics that were the most expressive of their self-identity would arouse their emotional attachment with the brand, making them obsessed with the brand. Most of them favored a particular luxury brand because its value expressive function fit their taste and style, showing who they were or would like to be. They stated that, in comparison with other brands, the most favored luxury brand gave them more meanings to their identities in a way that the brand's symbols and logos became a badge to reassure themselves and to signal to others what kind of person they were. Informants noted that they were continuously increasing the purchase of the same luxury brand because the brand's possession allowed them to unveil a consistent identity that fit their true self.

"It just speaks to me and attracts me more than other brands since they design things that fit my style and my taste and that reflects me." (Olivia)

"It (the brand) is just who I am, it is just me." (Christina)

"So, this is part of being with CK, because they really fit my personality. ... I wouldn't imagine myself changing my style, unless CK is gone and I would have to pick out something different. I can't stop buying it. It fits my style and taste." (Marcus)



Additionally, some informants indicated that they established intense relationships with some luxury brands because these brands allowed them to publicly connect themselves with specific luxury lifestyle and values. These brands were useful for differentiating the way of living for some informants, and as a way of belonging to and fitting oneself within a certain social group for some others.

“When you wear this brand, it shows the way you live and what type of people you go out with. It shows who you are as a person.” (Olivia)

“I would say that my lifestyle fits the style of that brand is echoing which is why I will keep shopping there. It understands my lifestyle and it shows that I can afford the luxury lifestyle.” (Joe)

Through the analysis of the interview data as demonstrated above, it is likely that consumers become obsessed with specific luxury brands as a result of knowing that the brand portrays who they are or who they would like to be, or associate themselves with certain lifestyle, values and beliefs that are represented or implied by the brand and shared by certain social groups. This finding is consistent with the view that individuals consume products that may symbolize status to improve social and/or self-standing (Eastman and Eastman, 2015). As Aspers and Godart (2013) note, fashion consumption is not only about the purchase of fashion products and services, but also the use of such products and services as a way of life in general.

Status values

It emerged from the data that some consumers may be motivated to become addicted to a specific luxury brand because the brand signals certain socially admired manners and status. Informants placed a strong emphasis on the brand's logo-embellished items, believing that brand names and logos must clearly show up and be very noticeable on the selected outfits and accessories. This allowed them to reveal their status-specific identity and personality through using such brands.

"If you buy and wear this very expensive brand, then it shows that you have a good job that gives you a good amount of money." (Harry)

"I like to wear big logos to grab attention. It is a luxury shirt. It shows my status." (Kevin)

"It is more to show others that if she can afford them then she must be someone special and important, rich or popular. So she will keep buying it every week." (Zilia)

"When people wear these brands they feel they belong to a higher social class and can gain respect." (Helen)

"The Diesel watches are easily noticeable. It shows I am an upper class." (Marc)

Informants also stated that their use of certain products from their favorable luxury brands would make people think more positively about them, driving them to obsessively use these brands in order to impress others and gain a certain level of respect, thus contributing to more social acceptance. For example, some informants were most likely attracted to luxury brands that clearly show how rich they were.

"If someone wears Chanel, people think he belongs to a higher social class. Because this person feels more respected he will nonstop buy from Chanel." (Helen)

“Oh my God, she’s wearing Michael Kors purse means... she has money.” (Jacob)

“If I see someone wearing Chanel, I would probably think she is either married to an extremely rich husband or she is either a doctor or a lawyer, someone who is important (Christina).

More importantly, the data revealed that informants were disposing of luxury brands that were positively recognized by their social group. For some, holding a product with a status symbol gives them the opportunity of becoming more socially attractive. Thus, the main motivation behind purchasing these specific brands is their concern on how others perceive and judge them based on the brands they possess in relation to the displayed wealth and not the product’s value itself. Given the acquired reward, informants were motivated to consistently use these products in public, turning these brands into objects of desires and obsessions due to the status value they reveal. Therefore, there seems to be a celebrity syndrome in that the more a certain group (be it family or friends) acknowledge and praise a brand, the higher the perception of the user of the brand, and hence the more excessive the user has become of the brand.

The above findings indicate the importance of the names of certain luxury brands that work as a major driver for consumers’ addiction to luxury brands. When using a luxury brand marks an elite status and enhances the person’s image and admiration in society, some individuals tend to become obsessed with these brands. To maintain a perceived status level, they may become more motivated to further engage with the given luxury brands, therefore resulting in an addictive relationship with the brand.

## Quality

Our data revealed that one of the motivators behind becoming addicted to luxury brands may be for securing superior and premium quality. Informants defined quality based on many criteria such as materials, components, physical performance, workmanship and durability. From their narratives emerged a distinct attention to and emphasis on the importance of the fabric's physical performance of particular luxury brands. For example, the fabric does not shrink, does not stretch out when worn or when laundered or dry-cleaned. Informants also believed that when the luxury brand product's color does not fade with continuous use, individuals would be further motivated to continue purchasing from the brand. They also emphasized the luxury brand's workmanship as an important condition for keeping their favoritism for the brand. Thus, the brands' premium quality is reflected in the perfectionism in workmanship and handmade manufacturing whereby all seams are perfectly stitched with no defaults and blemishes on the product. Informants also commented on the products' longevity and durability as a main motivator for being addicted to a particular luxury brand. They revealed that these luxury brands deliver everlasting goods due to the use of superior materials and workmanship. Thus, customers would not be able to throw the luxury products away even after extended periods of consumption.

“I am obsessed with this brand. It never failed to disappoint me. Probably I won't even look at anything else.” (Ray)

“The material is very good and lasts long. Quality means something that you wash and it doesn't just shrink, something that you can wear without ironing.” (Carol)

“Things from Gucci are worth 10 things from a normal store because they would last

twice as long as the other 10 things would.” (Olivia)

“The scarves don’t get ruined when you go out in winter. The color won’t fade away if you wash it.” (Yoanna)

“I am so obsessed with Burberry. It is the best quality. They last forever. They don’t get ruined ... so I think that I will always advocate for the brand, show my relationship with it, post about it and constantly buy from it and support it.” (Zilia)

The informants’ narratives throughout the interviews clearly suggest that the quality of a luxury brand that extends over the years may constitute one of the main reasons for their addiction to the brand. Accordingly, an individual’s perception of a premium quality product provided and maintained by a luxury brand may drive him or her to insistently purchase this brand. Indeed, superior quality and high price are regarded as the main identifiers of luxury products (Kim and Ko, 2010).

### ***Brand Addiction for Luxury fashion – Consequences***

#### ***Selectivity of style***

Our analysis of the data suggests that individuals who are addicted to specific luxury brands may tend to restrict their purchase decisions only to their addictive brands, ignoring other brands that might even add values to their life. As some luxury brands tend to retain the same tradition and consistent style for the brand identity over the years, informants believe that this gives the impression that brand addicts are adopting very repetitive looks. In some informants’ views, such selectivity might make brand addicts victims of the addictive brand as they might lose their

identity and exhibit only the brand's identity, thus making them miss the opportunity of having a personal, unique, and carefully adopted style.

"They are so much into this brand that they limit themselves to it, instead of going to different ones. They have the same style. They reflect the identity of the brand not their identity. They limit themselves to only one brand, instead of going to different ones.

They would have the same style from when they are 15 until they are 50 because they are always shopping from the same brand with the same style all over again." (Jade)

"Their style become kind of repetitive because they don't try different things." (Helen)

"They might not be open to other fashion styles out there, so, I feel like they are missing out on a lot of different opportunities they can find in other luxury brands." (Mary)

"They end up with the same styles just because they are shopping there too often."

(Carol)

"You are not different. You are like this brand now." (Jason)

This finding quest for some interpretations by drawing upon the self-concept theory. One of the self-concept theories postulates three dimensions: actual self (how a person perceives herself), ideal self (how a person would like to perceive herself) and social self (how a person presents herself to others) (Sirgy, 1982). While some informants thought selectivity of style may hinder brand addicts from developing and defining their own personal style, this may not be always true since "the expression of identity through fashion remains ambivalent, mostly because interpreting fashion is loaded with uncertainty" (Aspers and Godart, 2013, p. 185). For some brand addicts, there may be congruence between one's actual self and the social self that is

portrayed by using the addictive brand. For other brand addicts, they may intend to use the brand's image, style and identity to portray her ideal self although the ideal self may not be congruent with her actual self or social self. This suggests that for some individuals, the experience of addiction to luxury fashion brands may involve a paradoxical journey starting from being motivated by the desire of gaining self-identity and social status (expressiveness of self and social identity and status values) but ending in failing to represent the true-self by depending on the addictive brand's identity. On the other hand, this could be perceived as using brand's identity to self-encourage and facilitate realization of one's ideal self or social self since "Brand choice can send meaningful social signals to other consumers about the type of person using that brand" (Han et al., 2010).

#### Motivation to work harder

The data of this study revealed a consistent tendency of brand addicts' principle of "work harder to shop more from the brand". Informants expressed their dependence and obsession towards their addictive brands as a fuel to reinforce self-efficacy. Determined to keep buying their addictive brands, informants showed how keen they were to improve their income and standard of living through working much harder and staying additional hours at work. Some mentioned that they were even investing in themselves with more advanced degrees as a way to develop their careers and reach higher occupational positions.

"They have to work much harder, they have to afford this kind of life they chose and stay hours late just so that can buy this luxury brand." (Jason)

"They will definitely work as twice as hard." (Olivia)

“For me it’s a motivation to be more of hard worker. This way I can get all what I want.”

(Christina)

“I am doing my masters now. Then I will get a better post and I will be able to buy more from Burberry.” (Zilia)

“We need to work more and make a lot of money because we are going to spend more.”

(Carol)

This finding concurs with Cui et al.’s (2018) finding about some brand addicts’ financial management: “if necessary waiting until they can next afford to buy the addictive brand either by saving money or by working very hard to earn sufficient money” (p. 121). Moreover, this study’s finding lends support for the view that brand addiction may not be pathological (Cui et al., 2018) and may have some positive consequences (Martin et al., 2013; Mrad and Cui, 2017) such as working harder, always pushing to move forward, being determined to be productive in their jobs, and improve self-efficacy to succeed in education and career towards having the ability to purchase more products from their addictive brands.

#### Interpersonal relationship

The findings show that individuals who are addicted to specific luxury brands tend to be highly engaged with their brands to the extent that they might be no longer interested in keeping their social life. Informants stated that this form of behavior does interfere with other spheres of an individual’s life and more specifically with his or her relationships with family and friends, ultimately causing some stress in these relationships. Some noted that the main focus of brand addicts becomes the brand itself, making them only interested in being actively engaged in all the brands’ activities and in increasingly purchasing these brands. For instance, they stated that



brand addicts had the tendency to spend huge amounts of time just to engage with the brand such as searching the brands' websites, visiting their stores, attending their events and continuously talking about them to the extent of forfeiting other activities that they had planned with their surroundings.

“Their brand becomes their main focus. They lose attention to other important things... they will end up with no time for others. All they care about is visiting the store or talking about the brand to others.” (Marcus)

“Also, the social part of it. They might get into a fight with their families. Those around them are paying the price of their addiction.” (Ivy)

“They might spend a lot of their money on satisfying their addiction as opposed to spending it on more meaningful stuff.” Jade

As the price premium of luxury brands requires brand addicts to pay very high prices, their behavior may most likely lead to conflicts with their partners unless they share the addition to the same brands. Thus, these individuals might end up paying huge sums of money and might be prioritizing over more important things that can benefit their families, leading some of them to endure strained or permanently damaged relationships.

“They would prioritize buying the brand instead of paying for more important things... so personal trouble with their respective family member.” (Helen)

“They would probably prioritize the buying from the brand instead of putting things that truly matter or buy things that really matter first... so personal trouble with their whatever family member.” (Ivy)

These results suggest that some individuals at the extreme level of luxury brand addiction might fall into problematic situations in interpersonal relationships if their addiction is not shared or tolerated by their relationship partners. This might therefore interfere with their personal life and they are most likely to face some problems with their surroundings. This finding may not be surprising since any behavioral addiction at the extreme state may cause some negative issues.

#### Financial management

The data in the present study revealed mixed results in this regard. While it may not be surprising that addiction to luxury brands may cause some brand addicts to spend higher amounts of money, informants asserted that some brand addicts are likely to financially manage their spending while still spending considerable amounts of money on the brand. These individuals have the tendency to reach a stage whereby they may spend their monthly income or allocate part of their savings to buy the luxury brands products. However, they are still aware that they need to control themselves from exceeding their purchasing ability and going into debt. In addition, some informants stated that to keep a safe cash flow and be able to spend more on their brands, a solution would be to sell their old items and replace them with new ones.

“I would say, you would spend a big amount of money, a lot a lot of money, which I am personally experiencing with Calvin Klein but it is still manageable.” (Marcus)

“Thank God I have no financial problems. I’m able to save money and spend lots on Fendi.” (Jason)

“They badly want to buy from their brands that they would start selling old items to buy more.” (Yoanna)

Our findings also revealed that some participants may obtain personal loans and use credit cards to satisfy their addiction to luxury brands. As the cost of these brands is high, individuals are left without any additional cash after every purchase. Thus, the only remaining option would be to borrow money either from banks or from family and friends. Some informants described how hard it can be for people who are not wealthy enough to handle the high cost of these brands and keep purchasing them. Informants noted that an extreme outcome of this behavior might result in consumers’ inability to cover their loans which would subsequently put them into debt. On a side note, a small number of informants stated that in extreme forms of addictions whereby individuals are unable to pay back their loans and continue to engage in purchasing their luxury brands, they may get involved in illegal actions (e.g. stealing) just to acquire the desired luxury brand.

“I think there are two options. People have a lot of money and they are going to spend it all on it or they are going to borrow money and go in debts to buy this brand.” (Ray)

“If they don’t have the money to buy, they are gonna be in big trouble. They might steal from parents or stores.”- (Marc)

“Financial trouble. They might borrow money that they don’t have and not be able to pay it back.”- (Ivy)

“ You are gonna start relying on credit cards ... If you don’t even have the money to pay them off, late payments , minimum payments , all those stuff could get you in trouble. This will get you in trouble with the credit card company. These people could resort to lending money and going into more debt.” (Olivia)

“I guess getting a lot of debt at the end of the day.” (Harry)

The above results suggest that two different behaviors might result from addiction to luxury brands. Some individuals may be able to control themselves and manage their salaries in a way they can buy their addictive brands while not going beyond their means. However, in very rare cases, some individuals may have the tendency to spend considerable amounts of money to acquire these highly priced products and consequently end up with going into debt. Hence, while acquiring luxury fashion brands at premium prices may serve an important social function by “signaling to others that the owner of the product possesses desirable qualities that contributed to his or her success” (McFerran et al., 2014), for some brand addicts this may lead to uncontrollable spending and debt problems.

### ***Brand Addiction for Fast-Fashion – Motivators***

Continuous update of fashion-led items

Due to the shortened fashion cycle and quick changes in trends, consumers’ fashion calendar is rapidly becoming outdated. Informants stated that nowadays they can no longer update their fashion wardrobe only once in a season. Accordingly, they are turning to fast-fashion brands which generally provide them with a constantly changing assortment of items that are regularly

refreshed. Informants believed that the novelty in the weekly launched collections in terms of colors, fabric and style and merchandise rotation frequency makes them constantly feel fashionable and up-to-date. As new designs become publicly available within two to four weeks, informants noted that they can obtain the trendiest items all year long without having to wait for a long time for the new season's merchandise to be delivered to stores. Affected by celebrity culture, social media and high fashion, informants described their insistent need for novel items which can be best satisfied by referring to fast-fashion. As such, they considered fast-fashion brands as an important outlet that improves their personal style and fulfills their "fashion" dream.

"I am so obsessed with fast-fashion brands ... You always feel very fashionable, the styles change so frequently. Every week there is something new and different. When you wear it, you can't go wrong." (Helen)

"When a new trend goes on social media, I want it directly. The only way to get it on time is to buy it from fast-fashion brands like Zara." (Olivia)

As fashion trends change at a high speed, participants reflected their consistent fear of being left out and no longer considered as fashionable. Respondents noted that the ability of fast-fashion brands to launch products in parallel with upcoming catwalk trends reduces their fear of missing out on fashion trends and gives them access to runway trends found only within a limited period of time. This leads to irresistible temptations to visit the brands' stores more often and purchase in larger quantities.

"I know there is always a new collection at my disposal which doesn't get old. I don't have to wait much to be up-to-date." (Amy)

“It is very fast moving and it keeps up with the needs of modern women. I know that whenever I want to update my wardrobe, I always have a new collection available at H&M.” (Ivy)

“Some become so attached to fast fashion brands because they probably have collections that are faster than luxury brands”. (Carol)

These findings reflect that as fast-fashion brands offer the most popular trends combining the latest designs that celebrities wear or designers launch (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006, individuals become more obsessed with these brands. Accordingly, they are likely to have a strong desire to continuously visit the brands’ stores or website and to engage in repetitive buying.

#### Perceived value

The findings of this study indicate that brands’ perceived values act as a major motivator for respondents’ engagement in addictive behavior towards fast-fashion brands. Respondents often stated their concern in keeping up with the changes in fashion trends. They believed that fast-fashion brands provide them with a good monetary value of products whereby the displayed prices are reasonable compared to other fashion brands available in the market. This allows them to keep pace with the latest fashion trends and the most exciting designs that they could not afford to buy from luxury brands yet at very affordable prices. As fashion can become obsolete over a short period of time, respondents affirm that this influences their perception of value of fast-fashion brands, offering collections that combine high quality and yet, are affordable. The short-lived nature of fast fashion appears to be a contributing factor to a higher perceived value of fast-

fashion brands, tempting individuals who feel receiving a good bargain to reveal hoarding behaviors whereby they tend to collect and buy additional items from the brands.

“I cannot help myself not to buy from this brand ... Prices are very affordable. With stylish and trendy shirt priced between \$10-20, you feel motivated to buy 20 of them and to keep buying from this brand.” (Ivy)

“I trust Zara. When I order from them I do not have worry about the quality or the price since I know that they have trendy and cute clothes at affordable prices. I will get what I am paying for.” (Helen)

“Their clothes are pretty nice, very fashionable and cheap so it is worth their value (good quality for good price).” Roy, M, aged 18.

Informants also highlighted on the value of time, effort and search involved in attaining a fast-fashion product. Fast-fashion brands are astonishing them with their selection of the best cities and shopping malls in each country, being present almost everywhere. Respondents would sometimes put equal importance to the value of time as compared to the value of money, which suggests that their high engagement in fast-fashion brands is mainly due to the multiple benefits they receive from these time-saving brands.

“Forver21 is available everywhere. I can find everything I want. No need to go to other places that provide almost similar things at higher prices.” (Mary)

The results indicate that the value of fast-fashion brands is unquestionably appreciated based on the brands' deliverables in terms of the time during which the customer needs the product in addition to the price/quality it provides. As such, their strong emotional bonds with fast-fashion brands are mainly due to the convenience, accessibility, affordability and simplicity these brand offer which translate into great value to their customers.

#### Product assortments

As fashion trends are continually evolving, informants indicated their need to continuously renew their wardrobes. Driven by this need for change, they expressed their tendency to rely on fast-fashion brands that offer a variety of choices and styles. With items sold at affordable prices, informants highlighted their ability to buy additional products for the sake of keeping a diverse and versatile wardrobe. Thus, their behavior towards fast-fashion brands is mainly shaped by their need to embrace different styles and looks for the sake of moving away from one total look that identifies only one fashion brand. They also described their high excitement towards fast-fashion brands as these brands deliver an extensive variety of pieces that are designed to appeal to different consumers' tastes, allowing them to shop for different kind of products and complete their look at one go. This is fortified by the availability of items based on a selection of color palette and a diversity of prints, fabrics and sizes which played a role in enhancing their wellbeing.

“I find a huge selection of products in the store ranging from formal clothes to casual ones. You can buy shoes, suits and t-shirts at reasonable prices. I go out of the store completing my total look.” (Ohan)



“There is a variety of choice for different usage. They range from formal clothes to casual ones. This include dresses, suits, shirts, jeans and watches.” (Marc)

“I find a huge selection of products in the store. There is a wide variety of products with different styles featuring different colors and different sizes.” (Ivy)

“I can go shopping there for formal and informal events since I can find different products for different usage at different styles” (Amy)

Some informants also mentioned that they were obsessively reacting to fast-fashion brands that usually release limited edition collections with designer brands. Some gave the example of the fast-fashion brand H&M which collaborated lately with Balmain and a few other designers.

“I am so passionate about it. I can’t wait until they get their collaborations with designers. They do it every year with a new designer. Last year it was Moschino.” (Isis)

The above findings indicate that the huge selection of products in terms of styles, colors, fabrics and product categories may offer fast-fashion brand addicts the convenience of purchasing whatever they are seeking, thus, overcoming time limit and obtaining fashionable looks. Due to the updated fashion lifecycle, individuals may develop an irresistible desire to obtain a variety of items driving them to become highly dependent on the brand and to repetitively rely on it for their various occasions.

### ***Brand Addiction for Fast-Fashion – Consequences***

### Interpersonal relationship

The results indicate that individuals' frequent engagement and preoccupation in behaviors related to the addictive brands lead them to spending less time engaging in some family or social relationships. For some, their addiction to fast-fashion brands made them visit the brands' stores every single day. As their surroundings (family and friends) were not interested in joining them on a daily basis and considered them as becoming so boring, they ended up seeing them less. Some informants stated that brand addicts may not want anyone to join them on their shopping trips. As such, all these forms of behaviors tend to lead to fewer social interactions with the individuals' surroundings.

“I was shopping every day from this brand and I always wanted to shop and no one wanted to do it. So, I ended up not seeing my friends much.” (Amy)

As fast-fashion brands are entitled to continuously launch novel items, some participants were persistently preoccupied in checking the new brand releases. Therefore, they were highly engaged with the brand to the extent that their behavior affected their life and took considerable time away from their social life. In addition, they stated that their conversation with surroundings was at certain times tensed as the main discussion topic revolves around the buying enjoyment of their addictive brands. It is then inferred that brand addicts may continuously talking about and checking out the newly launched items while predicting the items that the brand will launch in the upcoming weeks.

“I always think about it. I keep telling my friends about what is new at Zara... I am so excited about the new items that will come next.” (Helen)

“Yeah losing their friends. If they are going out and they are getting to Zara every now and then, it is like boring.” (Ohan)

“They aren’t as social because they don’t have time for people.” (Harry)

“I will always be thinking about this brand, if I am so addicted to it I will also be like what I should get from this brand...so it kind of take part of their life.” (Marc)

The above results indicate that addiction to fast-fashion brands may lead to certain deterioration in interpersonal relationships. It may be the case that fast-fashion brand addicts may spend less than highly priced luxury brands, thus avoiding the financial concern that other family members may have. However, the fast-fashion brand addicts’ dedicated attention to brands may cost their social life as these people are usually preoccupied with the brand and they usually tend to care less about other things. This study’s finding of the negative influence of addiction to fast-fashion brands on interpersonal relationship opens a case that is not counted in the recent studies of brand addiction (Cui et al. 2018; Mrad and Cui 2017).

### Financial management

This study found that individuals who are addicted to fast-fashion brands have the tendency to spend a significant amount of money to buy these brands products. To satisfy their addiction to some of these brands, informants described their inability to control themselves from frequently visiting their beloved brands’ physical and online stores. In addition, as the fast-fashion brands

continuously launch new collections, brand addicts will start to experience the fear of missing out therefore tempting them to purchase much more. The rationale for being obsessed with fast-fashion is that the process of replenishing a person's wardrobe is generally cheap, therefore, they are motivated to continuously purchase. Consequently, this will result in buying a larger quantity of items and spending bigger amounts that benefit the brand. However, in this study, informants explained that the amount of money spent was still controllable and they did not consider their spending habits as a serious problem. Again, they iterated that fast-fashion brand prices were usually low and quite affordable as compared with premium prices of luxury brands.

“The price of fast-fashion is low compared to luxury brands. A luxury item could cost more than a \$1500. The consequences of addiction to fast-fashion are not that severe compared to luxury because their price of fast-fashion is very low. So, you spend less compared to luxury.” (Helen)

“Every week there is a new collection... People end up spending more money than needed for the same clothes again and again.” (Jade)

“Buyers spend more than they need since they end up buying more than they want which is the case of almost all the people.” (Amy)

The above results indicate that in the case of fast-fashion brand addiction, individuals tend to amass quantity over quality. Accordingly, the money they spend to buy the given quantity will add up and drive people to spend higher amounts. In line with the previously discussed elements of brand addiction (Cui et al., 2018), this outcome of addiction to fast-fashion brands may not lead to serious financial issues as prices of these brands' products are generally affordable.

## **Discussion and Implications**

The objective of this study was to examine the causal relations of brand addiction as a form of consumer-brand behavior in the context of luxury and fast-fashion brands. The results offer important contributions to the body of knowledge in the fields of consumer-brand relationships and brand management. The results indicate three different motivators for luxury versus fast fashion brand addiction: a) expressiveness of self and social identity, status values and perceived quality for luxury brand addiction; and b) continuous update of fashion-led items, perceived value and product assortments for fast fashion. The results suggest mixed consequences of brand addiction to luxury versus fast fashion: a) selectivity of style and motivation to work harder for brand addiction to luxury fashion; and b) interpersonal relationship and financial management for brand addiction to both luxury and fast-fashion.

The findings pinpoint that for different types of brands, different mechanism lead to brand addiction. This study asserts that certain individual needs such as the need to belong to certain a social status and to possess items that reflect the person's style, personality and taste, do affect his or her tendency to develop addictive relationships with particular luxury brands. This confirms that these needs form an important driving power for marketing luxury products (Dreze and Nunez, 2009), supporting Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) work in that the more a brand is self-expressive, the stronger the emotional attachment the consumer tends to develop. Further to this, perceived quality, a main element in assessing the luxury product's physical performance, affects consumers' addiction to luxury brands. Accordingly, the consistency in delivering a meticulous quality reduces the perceived risk associated with product performance and drives consumers to keep purchasing from the brand. This supports the luxury consumption literature which suggests

perceived quality as an important characteristic to categorize a brand as being a luxury one (e.g. Ko et al., 2017).

However, in the context of fast-fashion, the novelty in the supplied collections in addition to the delivery of a variety of items at affordable prices played a major role in affecting consumers' consumption behavior. A noteworthy fact is that fast-fashion generally provides them with a constantly changing assortment of items that responds to momentary tastes in the marketplace. While the items stocked in fast-fashion stores are "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow" (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010), consumers became more motivated to develop obsessive behaviors towards these brands, influenced by the fear of missing out on fashion trends. To look fashionable enough, individuals are likely to develop hoarding behaviors, classified by Mrad and Cui (2018) as a feature of brand addiction through which brand addictive items are collected.

The findings indicate that for luxury products, consumers value the reluctance of luxury brands in maintaining a traditional and consistent image even though this may lead them to be limited only to one style. On the other hand, consumers of fast-fashion brands seem to recognize the convenience and degree of fashionability these brands offer. Thus, addiction to luxury or fast-fashion brands is not only driven by financial resources but it also reflects consumers' personalities and value systems such as value for heritage versus value for fast-paced change.

The results also suggest different consequences for luxury versus fast-fashion brand addiction: selectivity of style, motivation to work harder, interpersonal relationships and financial issues emerged as consequences of addiction to luxury while interpersonal relationships and financial

issues emerged as consequences for fast-fashion addiction. The most positive consequence amongst all addiction to luxury brands is the motivation to work harder which supports Cui et al. (2018) study. This calls individuals to put forth further effort and work very hard to earn sufficient money so that they can purchase their addictive brands. Also, the selectivity of style theme is well supported by the literature which suggests brand exclusivity, a factor whereby individuals “limit their consideration sets to their addictive brands, and omit other brands from their consideration set” as an element of brand addiction (Cui et al., 2018, p. 120).

The interpersonal relationships and financial issues that are experienced by brand addicts are also triggered by different mechanisms, based on the brand type. For fast-fashion brand addicts, the preoccupation in collecting a larger assortment of products by continuously shopping may cause interferences with their personal relationships. It is suggested that consumers who are addicted to fast-fashion brands have the tendency to spend considerable amounts of money to buy products from these brands. However, results indicate that the amount of money spent is still controllable due to fast-fashion products prices that are generally low and affordable.

On the other hand, for luxury brand addicts, interferences with their personal relationships appear to be triggered by an increasing engagement in the brand itself and in prioritizing huge sums to the brand over more important things. In support with research on brand addiction (Cui et al., 2018), findings also suggest that luxury brand addicts may develop two different attitudes towards financial issues. On the one hand, some individuals may be able to financially manage themselves while devoting all their income on their favorite brand, and if needed ceasing their purchase until they were able to manage to purchase the addictive brand either through

putting money aside or working hard to generate enough money. On the other hand, given the premium pricing, some brand addicts may lose control and end up in over spending and debts.

Marketers can benefit from this study to further understand how to involve consumers in relationships that are followed by positive consequences. Considering that addiction to luxury brands may lead to some detrimental effects in some rare cases, marketing managers are socially responsible in this situation to help these individuals deal with it by designing and planning some proactive and reactive strategies. Marketers can develop campaigns whereby they focus on enhancing relationships among people. They can also design events in creative ways, inviting their customers to attend activities that they can perform with their families or friends. Meanwhile, they may also encourage their customers to think about their spending and enlighten them about the risks of addiction to their favorite luxury brands while developing some campaigns to “Shop Responsibly” (Horváth and Birgelen, 2015). While brand addiction reveals some positive consequences in this context, marketing managers should be careful from an ethical perspective, selecting branding strategies that would not negatively affect consumers’ well-being. As such, they should be warned and restrained from motivating and enhancing the negative aspects of addiction to brands, taking their corporate social responsibility in this case and trying to help society reduce the behavior that may result in negative consequences. Marketers’ role nowadays does not only reside in making profits over the short-term but they should offer healthy alternatives for individuals and improve their quality of life and benefit the society (e.g. Horváth and Adıgüzel, 2018; Horváth and Birgelen, 2015). Accordingly, brands can defend themselves from critics on their marketing principles that stimulate irrepressible and harmful consumption behaviors.



Although the findings of this research are encouraging, a number of limitations must be acknowledged and addressed. The first limitation lies in the examination of consumers' addiction to particular brands in one geographic location, the U.S. Thus, it will be interesting for practitioners and academics to explore consumers' addiction to luxury and fast-fashion brands in other markets. As such, the distinctiveness of the research setting limits the generalization of the findings to considerably distinct and wider populations. Given the qualitative nature of this study, findings cannot be generalized without more validation. As research on brand addiction is still scant, a myriad of other motivations and consequences may exist and may remain unknown. Accordingly, researchers are invited to further explore the antecedents and consequences of brand addition in different contexts.

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